

FAST BLAST

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM
THE CALIFORNIA STUDENT AID COMMISSION



OUR MISSION: "MAKE EDUCATION BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL FINANCIALLY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL CALIFORNIANS"

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA

MARCH 2012

A MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DIANA FUENTES-MICHEL



The March 2 Cal Grant application deadline is now behind us. As of this writing, the Commission has issued over 96,000 new 2012-13 Cal Grant A and B High School Entitlement awards, a nearly eight percent increase over last year at the same time.

We want to thank the dedicated work of teachers, counselors and volunteers who encouraged students to fill out the FAFSA and submit their GPA's. We are also proud of the growth of the **Cash for College** workshop program. This year 685 workshops were held in 52 counties throughout our state (compared to the 609 last year)!

The Commission recognizes that the volume of applicants articulates the critical financial need of students during these challenging economic times for California. The positive message that help is available clearly resonated throughout our state.

At their January 26, 2012 meeting, in response to the Governor's proposed reductions to the Cal Grant Program and the elimination of the Loan Assumption Programs, the Commission adopted the following resolution:

"The California Student Aid Commission sees higher education as an investment in California's future. Education is the economic imperative of our time and the civil rights issue of our generation. Access to higher education is the basis for the formation of our democratic society. As the stewards of access to opportunity for higher education, we urge the Legislature to give the highest priority to students in the budget during this time of financial downturn."

Budget hearings and discussions are continuing. Commission staff is attending all meetings relevant to Cal Grants and higher education. We will provide updates as more information is known.

Diana Fuentes-Michel
1975-1979 Cal Grant B Recipient

Cal Grant Awards Reinstated

With the enactment of Senate Bill 70 (SB 70), Cal Grant recipients renewing for the 2011-12 academic year, like new applicants, had to meet income and asset ceilings and minimum need requirements. This resulted in about 16,000 Cal Grant recipients being disqualified during the renewal process for not meeting the new requirements. About 5,500 former Cal Grant B recipients met both the Cal Grant A and Cal Grant B program requirements at the time they were initially awarded the Cal Grant B. The Commission re-evaluated the records of these 5,500 students under the requirements of the Cal Grant A program, which has a higher income ceiling. Approximately 5,100 previously disqualified Cal Grant B recipients are now eligible under the Cal Grant A program.

Students whose Cal Grant B award was withdrawn but who meet the Cal Grant A program requirements have been reinstated with a Cal Grant A award. The Commission has sent e-mail notifications to these students informing them of their award status and directing them to work with their financial aid offices to ensure that their Cal Grant A award is processed accordingly.

If a student has changed schools, we are requesting students to log into their [WebGrants for Students](#) (WGS) account to confirm their current college of attendance. For students attending a California Community College, the Commission will hold the Cal Grant A award in a Community College Reserve status for up to two years. The student may activate the award once they complete their community college education and transfer to an eligible school.

Students who were unable to attend school this year, can apply for a leave of absence and place their Cal Grant A award on hold for up to a year. Students may apply for the leave of absence on WGS so that the award offer does not get withdrawn. The Commission encourages students to monitor their Cal Grant award by logging into WGS at www.webgrants4students.org.

The Commission appreciates your partnership in our efforts to provide additional financial aid benefits to these students. Guidance on Cal Grant and WebGrants processing can be found in **GOM 2012-10**. Contact the School Support Services Branch at (888) 294-0153 or at schoolsupport@csac.com if you have any questions.

KEEPING UP WITH THE COMMISSION

To provide timely operational updates to our constituents, the Commission utilizes electronic technology in the forms of Operations Memos, Policy Bulletins and Special Alerts. Following are links to the most recent communications. To begin receiving these publications, sign up through CSAC List Services. From the CSAC home page, select ["Links"](#) and then select ["CSAC List Services."](#)

Operations Memo (Grant Operations Memo/GOM)

GOM 2012-10, issued 3/16, informed schools of the reinstatement of Cal Grant recipients who were disqualified during the renewal process for the 2011-12 academic year for failing to meet the Cal Grant B income ceiling and outlined criteria for reinstatement.

GOM 2012-09, issued 3/16, announced that the 2011-12 spring quarter term payments (checks) for the California Chafee Grant Program were mailed to institutions on March 13, 2012.

GOM 2012-08, issued 3/1, notified high schools and colleges that additional sessions have been added to the 2012 Cal Grant and Specialized Programs webinar training sessions.

GOM 2012-07, issued 2/17, announced the initial 2012-13 Cal Grant selection process for the High School Entitlement (E1) cycle and provided information regarding applicable forms, reports and processes.

GOM 2012-06, issued 2/17, reminded high schools and colleges of the March 2 Cal Grant filing deadline.

GOM 2012-05, issued 2/17, notified participating institutions that the 2011-12 Spring Term Child Development Grant Payments were mailed to institutions on 2/16/12.

GOM 2012-04, issued 1/25, provided an update on the California Chafee Foster Youth Grant Program and announced the availability of the 2012-13 application.

Special Alert (Grant Special Alert/GSA)

GSA 2012-03, issued 2/16, outlined the Governor's Proposed 2012-13 Budget and the Cal Grant Award impact.

GSA 2012-02, issued 2/8, announced expanded Call Center hours, 8:45 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., effective February 21, 2012 through March 9, 2012.

GSA 2012-01, issued 1/23, provided Cal Grant participating institutions with the opportunity to review the proposed changes to the 2012-16 Cal Grant Program Institutional Participation Agreement.

FAFSA COMPLETION BY HIGH SCHOOL

U. S. Department of Education

For the last two years, the U. S. Department of Education has received high school attendance information from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The Department is now publishing FAFSA completions by high school. Information is available at <http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov/datacenter/fafsahs.html>. The federal high school completion numbers are publicly viewable by state and high school. Individual student data is not viewable.

California Student Aid Commission

The Commission also provides high schools with this same FAFSA completion data, Cal Grant GPA submission data and award status by student. For student privacy, the Commission will release this data only through WebGrants, the Commission's Internet-based access for transferring this Cal Grant to high schools.

High schools are encouraged to establish access to WebGrants not just to view their student FAFSA and GPA submission data but also in preparation for the 2013-14 financial aid year when the California Dream Act will take full affect giving AB 540 eligible students eligibility for the state Cal Grant program. Cal Grant GPA submission for this student population may require GPA submission without Social Security numbers (SSNs).

To learn more about WebGrants please visit <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=1191>. For further information on gaining WebGrants access, and how to submit Cal Grant GPAs without using student SSNs, please contact the Commission's School Support Services Branch at 888-294-0153 or schoolsupport@csac.ca.gov.

After the FAFSA Live Online Video Events

The Commission, Cash for College and CASFAA invite high schools and their seniors to join the **Cash for College CollegeWeek Live Video Event** for next steps on financial aid awards and packages on Wednesday April 11, 2012 and Tuesday, May 1, 2012 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

High school seniors and senior classrooms can log-in for live video events to learn how to:

- "Fix Your FAFSA" - fixing common errors
- Create a WebGrants For Students Account to track your Cal Grant
- Get the most out of your Cal Grant award
- Decode your Financial Aid Award Letter and Compare Financial Aid Offers

Students will also be able to log in from home or in computer labs after school from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. to chat in questions to campus and Commission staff.

To register for the CollegeWeek Live events and view last year's events, please visit: www.calgrants.org/collegeweeklive.

March and April FAFSA Follow-up and College Financial Aid Award Letters

By now, students who submitted the FAFSA should have received their Student Aid Report (SAR). It is important for students to carefully review the SAR to make sure that the listed information is correct. If there is an asterisk next to the EFC figure on the SAR, the U. S. Department of Education has chosen the student for FAFSA verification. Through the verification process, student FAFSA data is checked against copies of signed tax returns to insure the integrity of the financial aid process. The student's college campus will require the submission of all requested documentation to the financial aid office before any financial aid can be released to the student.

In April, colleges will be sending financial aid award letters. Students must note any deadlines to respond on the award offer. To assist the student in evaluating the financial aid award, each college campus is required to have a "Net Price" calculator on their website. This is usually on the college's Financial Aid page. Families should consider meeting with financial aid staff members to discuss their situation if the student's award package is not sufficient to allow the student to attend or if the family financial situation has changed.

Seniors can't yet relax! In May comes the College Board AP Exams. The student's AP scores determine how much college credit is granted and college credit for AP Exams can mean big savings. Student should continue to work hard because colleges will want to see their senior-year grades.



Interest Remittance

**Interest earned on Cal Grant funds for the
2011 calendar year is due by March 01, 2012**

To remit, use the interest remission form at:
<http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=1317>.

Submit the completed form and interest payment to the
Commission.

Contact Justin Watkins at jwatkins@csac.ca.gov or 916.464.6425
if you have any questions.

Arthur Marmaduke High School Counselor Award

The Arthur Marmaduke High School Counselor award honors excellence in student counseling. Named after Arthur Marmaduke, the first California Student Aid Commission Executive Director, the recipients is selected based on nominations from high school principals or their designee. For further information, please visit this [link](#) on the Commission's website.

Nominations are due March 30, 2012!



**CHANGE IN
CUSTOMER
RELATIONS BRANCH
HOURS!**

To process the paper GPA verifications forms, Customer Relations Branch hours will be:

**10:00 a.m. until 4:45 p.m. Monday thru Thursday
Closed Fridays: March 23, 2012 and March 30, 2012**

The hours will return to normal beginning April 2, 2012:

Normal hours are 10 a.m. until 4:45 p.m. Monday - Friday

CALL: 1.888.224.7268

E-MAIL: student.support@csac.ca.gov

California Student Aid Commission Addresses

Our mailing address:

California Student Aid Commission
Attn: (Insert Name of Branch) *
P.O. Box 419026
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9026

For UPS or overnight delivery only:

California Student Aid Commission
Attn: (Insert Name of Branch)*

10834 International Drive, Suite 100
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

*Please direct mail to one of the following branches:

- Executive Office
- Administration & External Affairs
- Program Administration & Services
- Information Technology Services
- Federal Policy & Programs
- Legal & Audit Services

